

Playing the Piper: A Narratological Interpretation of John Corigliano's *Pied Piper Fantasy* (1982)

By
Margaret Ann Lambie
DMA, University of Kansas, 2018
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BM, Hastings College, 2014

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Chair: David Alan Street

James Michael Kirkendoll

Margaret Rose Marco

Marylee Z. Southard

Eric Wolf Stomberg

Date Defended: August 23, 2018

The thesis committee for Margaret Ann Lambie certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

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Abstract

John Corigliano's *Pied Piper Fantasy* is a rather unusual concerto in the flute world. Written for and premiered by James Galway in 1982, the piece tells the familiar tale of the Pied Piper in Hamelin. In addition to being technically challenging, the piece has a music-theatrical dimension, including a suggested costume and directions for how the soloist enters and exits the stage. Because of the significance of the fable to the piece, an analysis that addresses this specific aspect seems appropriate. Although other authors have addressed this topic in the music to some extent, there is room for a more thoroughly narrativized interpretation as a possible basis for performance.

This study consists of four complementary chapters. Chapter One, "The Pied Piper Coming to the Stage," presents a brief history of the piece and an understanding of Corigliano's career and compositional style. Chapter One also addresses some of the other scholarship on the *Pied Piper Fantasy*. Chapter Two, "The Pied Piper Story in Literary History," offers a short overview of the tale throughout history followed by a narrative analysis of the story of the Pied Piper. Chapter Three, "A Narratological Analysis of the *Pied Piper Fantasy*," discusses the piece in relation to wider concepts of narrative organization. The staged aspect of the work is also addressed. The final chapter, "Enacting the Fable: The *Pied Piper Fantasy* in Performance," addresses the practical application of the ideas explored throughout the previous chapters. Flutists who have performed the work were consulted with respect to the ways in which dramatic considerations influenced their performances.

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Chapter 1:

The Pied Piper Coming to the Stage

John Corigliano was born on February 16, 1938 in York City. His mother was a pianist and teacher, and his father was the concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic for 23 years. Corigliano spent many hours watching his father in rehearsal, absorbing the music and the sounds of the orchestra. Eventually, his interest in music led to studies at Columbia University and the Manhattan School of Music. After completing his studies, Corigliano worked as an assistant in the production of Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concerts. In 1963, his Sonata for Violin and Piano brought him into the public eye as a composer. It was not until his first wind concertos, however, that he began to use his architectural approach to composition. His concertos for oboe and clarinet (1975 and 1977 respectively) are constructed rather as a building is. Corigliano begins with the foundation, the shape of the piece as a whole, before writing in any detail. Corigliano described his compositional process thus:

I design the piece, build the piece, I find out what the big questions are because they are the ones I want to answer first. Then I ask if it is a multi-movement piece, and if so, what shape are the movements and how do they relate to each other? Would I need motivic material for this, or thematic ideas...I narrow the scope little by little until I get into a position where I know what I need. Then I look for and find music.¹

In addition to traditional genres, Corigliano also wrote multiple film scores. *The Red Violin* (1997) famously won him an Academy Award; *A Williamsburg Sampler* (1974) and *Altered States* (1980) are less well known, but were also important to his development as a composer. Film scores illustrate explicit narratives with music that is both novel and approachable, qualities that transfer to the *Pied Piper Fantasy*.

¹ Jed Distler, "John Corigliano: One of the US's Most Open-Minded Composers Has Embraced Everything from Film Soundtracks to Opera," *Gramophone*, September 2016, 82.

Corigliano was initially reluctant to compose a substantial flute work when James Galway suggested the idea in 1978. His recent substantial works were wind concertos, and he was hesitant to consider writing yet another, in spite of Galway's prominence as a soloist. Galway had been a child prodigy. Before even beginning his classical music studies in earnest, he won the junior, senior, and open Belfast Flute Championships in a single day. By the time Corigliano was considering writing for him, Galway had played with the London Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, which he left (rather dramatically) for his solo career.² Many composers, including Malcolm Arnold and Joaquín Rodrigo, had already written concertos for him; his approach to flute playing was and is unmistakable and much sought after. It was not his virtuosity, though, but Galway's background in whistles and piping that fascinated Corigliano. In spite of his reluctance, Corigliano began an exploration of the folklore related to piped instruments that in turn led him to the story of the Pied Piper. Working principally from Robert Browning's poem, "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," Corigliano adapted the tale to better suit a dramatic scenario.³ James Galway premiered the work with Los Angeles Philharmonic, under the direction of Myung-Whun Chung on February 4th, 1982.

The piece was and continues to be well received. Some critics suggest that underneath all the pageantry, the work lacks musical depth.⁴ Most, however, enjoy and delight in the characters created through the music.⁵ Since its premiere, the piece has been performed and recorded by artists including Galway, Alexa Still, and Demarre McGill. Because of the many theatrical

² Jed Distler, "John Corigliano: One of the US's Most Open-Minded Composers Has Embraced Everything from Film Soundtracks to Opera," *Gramophone*, September 2016, 82.

³ "Programme Note John Corigliano *Pied Piper Fantasy: Concerto for Flute and Orchestra*," Musical Sales Classical, accessed July 7, 2018, <http://www.musicalsclassical.com/composer/work/26994>.

⁴ Michael Oliver, "Corigliano Flute Concerto; Voyage," *Gramophone*, October 1988, <https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/corigliano-flute-concerto-voyage>.

⁵ Jeremy Eichler, "James Galway Pipes Away Swarms of Concertgoing Rats," *New York Times*, February 28, 2004, 15, <https://search-proquest-com.www2.lib.ku.edu/docview/432672457?accountid=14556>.

elements involved, the piece is more complicated to mount than many other modern flute concertos, but it continues to hold attraction for both performers and audiences.

Not surprisingly, Pied Pipers have been represented musically for centuries. Operas, operettas, and song cycles have all told variations of what happened in Hamelin, but none of them have become indispensable staples of the repertoire.⁶ Flute works based on the Piper are not as common as one might suppose, either. One version, Adolfus Hailstork's *The Pied Piper of Harlem* (1980), depicts scenes from the fable in three movements with contrasting musical styles: "Here Come De Piper," "Wid a Twinkle in His Eye," and "Git On Board (The 'A' Train) Li'l Chillun." Another work, *The Pied Piper* by Gordon Jacob for solo flute and piccolo (1959), gives two views from the tale with movements called "The Spell" and "March to the River Weser." While each of these pieces touch on the concept of the Piper, they rely primarily on the fact that the Piper played some kind of flute. Corigliano gives a much more comprehensive retelling in a work that, either in spite or because of its difficulty and logistical complications, proves appealing for performers and audiences alike.

Other studies have given consideration to the *Pied Piper Fantasy* from various academic viewpoints. In his thesis, "Compositional Issues with Corigliano, Oliveros, and Kernis," Keith Gregory Dippre included an interview with Corigliano. Dippre's questions examine Corigliano's particular notation of aleatoric and semi-improvisational writing, particularly in the *Pied Piper Fantasy*, and music in general, both in the classical and pop worlds.⁷ The remainder of Dippre's commentary covers issues addressed by the other composers, but several of his questions about notation and aleatory writing will provide additional insight later on in the present survey. A

⁶ Wolfgang Mieder, *The Pied Piper: A Handbook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 116.

⁷ Keith Gregory Dippre, "Compositional Issues with Corigliano, Oliveros, and Kernis" (master's thesis, Ohio State University, 2001), page number, <https://search-proquest-com.www2.lib.ku.edu/docview/304719498?pq-origsite=primo>.

reference to the piece also appears in a quote from Viviana Cumplido on the subject of audience engagement which Catherine Ramirez discusses in “The Soloist’s Path to Optimal Musical Communication,” but the reference to the *Pied Piper* is brief.⁸

Daniel Walker’s “Music as Representational Art” uses the *Pied Piper* as a case study to illustrate paradigms of programmatic music.⁹ Walker begins by presenting “Storyboard,” “Episodic,” “Tone Painting,” and “Character Study” as foundational methods of representation through music. He argues that by taking a poem as a source and adapting it, using tone painting for elements such as the rats, and the representation of the townspeople, Corigliano fulfills many of the expectations traditionally associated with programmatic music. Although Walker gives a detailed analysis of the *Pied Piper Fantasy*, he does not approach the work strictly from a narratological standpoint, nor does he come to the piece as a performer.

⁸ Catherine Ramirez, “The Soloist’s Path to Optimal Musical Communication” (DMA thesis, Rice University, 2012), 93, <https://search-proquest-com.www2.lib.ku.edu/docview/1033829492/?pq-origsite=primo>.

⁹ Daniel Walker, “Volume I: Music as Representational Art; Volume II: ‘Awakening’” (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2014), page number, <https://search-proquest-com.www2.lib.ku.edu/docview/1615830529/?pq-origsite=primo>.

Chapter 2:

The Pied Piper Story in Literary History

The tale of the Pied Piper has appeared in many forms throughout the last few centuries, as detailed by Wolfgang Mieder.¹⁰ The year 1284 seems to be accepted as its point of origin, although this date appears to have been identified only retrospectively. There is also a record of a stained-glass window from 1300, inconveniently destroyed in 1600, that is said to have been the earliest representation of the Piper in Hamelin. Whether the plague or a natural disaster was the likely inspiration is uncertain, but inscriptions in the town of Hamelin and written accounts, some of which are described below, give the tale some additional historical basis.

The simplest form of the Pied Piper story is familiar to most, largely due, for English audiences, to Browning's poem. The town of Hamelin is infested with rats; the strangely-dressed Piper appears and promises to rid Hamelin of the rats for a fee; the Piper plays, driving the rats to their deaths in the river; the town rejoices and then refuses to pay; the Piper plays again, and this time, all the children follow him into a mountain where they and he disappear. Suggested reasons for this historic loss range from the plague, a children's crusade, and a kidnapping to a repopulation mission. None, however, has been substantiated.¹¹

Many Piper stories begin with the words "In the year 1284." The earliest account, according to Mieder, was not discovered until 1936, but apparently originated in the fifteenth century. This short story cites exactly 130 children, a man with a pipe, and the year 1284 on the Feasts of Saint John and Paul.¹² Rats are notably absent from this version. Hans Zeitlos wrote an

¹⁰ Mieder, *The Pied Piper*.

¹¹ Roger Thurow, "Pied Piper Charms the Historians Now—7 Centuries Later," *The Flutist Quarterly* (Summer 1984): 31.

¹² Mieder, *The Pied Piper*, 32.

account in 1553 that also omits any reference to rats. Zeitlos sets his version in 1283 and writes that the Piper might return after 300 years. Rats, in fact, appear in parallel stories for many years before the two plot lines merge. The first account that combines a musician taking children and a rat-catcher is found in the *Zimmer Chronicle* from 1565 by Count Froben Christoph von Zimmer of Swabia.¹³

By the time the Grimm Brothers started collecting their fairy tales in the early nineteenth century, the story of the Piper existed in many versions. It was not until 1981 that Donald Ward published his translation of the Grimm collection in English, but English versions date back to 1605 in Richard Verstegan's *A Restitution of Delayed Intelligence in Antiquities*.¹⁴ Unlike many versions, Verstegan cites the year 1376 rather than 1284, so it seems likely that Robert Browning referred to this as a source for his 1842 poem.¹⁵

In addition to the many versions in poetry and prose, the Pied Piper has appeared in a number of other art forms from plays and operas to cartoons and movies. Disney's 1933 short version, lasting about 8 minutes, concludes with the Toyland song that was used years later in *Babes and Toyland*.¹⁶ Disney's Piper leads the children into the mountain, but he is clearly represented as saving them from their wicked and unfaithful community as he punishes the town. Carl Zuckmayer, likewise, gives a relatively cheerful telling in his 1975 play, *Der Rattenfänger*.¹⁷ The children seem happy to escape their town and families to follow the Piper.

¹³ Mieder, *The Pied Piper*, 32-4.

¹⁴ Mieder, *The Pied Piper*, 31.

¹⁵ Mieder, *The Pied Piper*, 46.

¹⁶ "The Pied Piper," *Silly Symphony*, directed by Wilfred Jackson (uncredited) (1933; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Productions), accessed July 11, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyI3Z2cx6QY>.

¹⁷ Mieder, *The Pied Piper*, 114.

In contrast, the 1979 novel, *What Happened in Hamelin* by Gloria Skurynski, is a dire warning for children to avoid drugs and the advances of strangers.¹⁸

Although there are a great many variants of the Piper tale, several elements remain the same and can be addressed through narrative analysis. Where there are differences, this paper will rely on Browning. A few key concepts of narrative should be addressed before they are applied to this tale, the first being narrative itself. According to Aristotle, a story consists of a beginning, a middle, and an end, with the three parts being connected. Aristotle emphasized the importance of both cohesion and economy in a narrative. In other words, not only should the beginning, middle, and end be related, but they should progress directly without implausible tangents. The Piper is an excellent example of a tidy beginning, middle, and end. In the beginning, there are too many rats; in the middle, the Piper takes care of the rats and the town reneges; in the end, the Piper takes the children. In even the most detailed and poetic variants there are not substantial side plots, no love story between the Piper and a town maid, no detailed account of one of the town's children aspiring to be the mayor someday. The beginning, middle, and end come about seamlessly and in a logical order.

J. Hillis Miller, among others, continues beyond the question of what narrative is and addresses the question of why narrative is.¹⁹ Miller writes that people try to make sense of the world through narrative, that we use stories to investigate life, to persuade, and to affirm or challenge our ideas. Here again, the Piper story has clear semantic resonances. According to Mieder, an event happened in Hamelin, probably around 1284, resulting in the loss of a large number of the children or youth of the community. Over time, additions like the rats and the concept of punishment (for not paying the Piper) have become integral as a way to make sense of

¹⁸ Mieder, *The Pied Piper*, 114-15.

¹⁹ J. Hillis Miller, "Narrative," in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1990), 68.

the event. So, *The Pied Piper* has developed to better answer a historical question and to answer a moral question. However, Miller also asks why individuals as well as cultures at large are prepared to listen to the same stories over and over again.²⁰ He concludes that this is how we establish a sense of order, of expectations. In the same way, worshipers learn the order of a religious service and expect it to stay the same within the frame of ritual. Repetition in narrative builds our sense of how the world works. Repeating and adapting *The Pied Piper* for over 700 years was an effort both to answer the strange question about loss and to impress the moral imperative to keep promises.

In the overwhelming majority of stories, an initial situation is presented and goes through a reversal, or *peripeteia*, with the possibility that something is ultimately learned—a point of enlightenment known as *anagnorisis*. These Greek terms are best explained through the story of *Oedipus Rex*—a complete reversal of fortune is accompanied by Oedipus learning something elemental about himself. There are characters which include a protagonist, an antagonist, and a witness who may or may not be one of the other two. Pied Piper tales fulfill all of these narrative expectations. An initial situation presents itself; the town, in great difficulty, employs the Piper. Browning is quite clear (Stanza 6, line 96) that “employs” is the correct word, for when the Piper requests a thousand guilders for the service he will provide, the mayor offers fifty thousand.²¹ A clear reversal takes place when the Piper, who has saved the town from the rats, takes away their children when the town refuses to pay. The moralistic tone of most narratives suggests that surely something was learned, if not by the town, then by the reader.

The principal characters of the Pied Piper tale include the Piper himself, the rats, the townsfolk, and the children, but identifying their functional roles can be difficult. Certainly, the

²⁰ Miller, “Narrative,” 72.

²¹ Robert Browning, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (New York: Knopf, Distributed by Random House, 1993), 26.

rats are antagonists who are defeated, but what of the Piper and the townsfolk? In some stories, the tale is a tragedy with the townsfolk suffering unimaginable loss. In other versions, the Piper is clearly the savior of the children, removing them from a state of peril. As with W. B. Yeats's "The Stolen Child," it may be up to the listener or reader to decide whether the children are saved or stolen. Browning's injured boy, who did not make it through the mountain with the other children, feels cheated out of a better fate, and the fairies of Yeats promise the Stolen Child (lines 9-12) respite from the world:

Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand.
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.²²

And yet, the child is called stolen, and all the children in the village seems a heavy fine for not paying a thousand guilders. Perhaps neither character is truly the antagonist. The townspeople face Greed, the true antagonist, and lose, and the Piper administers the penalty.

Other theorists have proposed a variety of commonalities to narratives that may also be useful for understanding Piper tales. Russian formalism, presents the contrast of the story itself, *fabula*, and discourse or *sjyzhet*, the way the story is presented.²³ The actual telling of the story, the discourse, takes a series of events and gives them reason and purpose. In the same vein, Hayden White addresses the difference between narrated and narrativized history.²⁴ From this perspective, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln can be a bullet point on a list of nineteenth-century events or a narrativized story. This distinction is what makes "The king died. The queen died." incomplete as a narrative. "The King died and then, the Queen died of grief." (E. M.

²² William Butler Yeats, "The Stolen Child," in *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1956), 18.

²³ Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (London: Routledge, 1981), 170.

²⁴ Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," in *On Narrative*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 2-3.

Forster), however, is a complete narrative: there is discourse working on the events. In other words, the historical fact of Hamelin's children going missing has been narrativized into *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. Browning's (and others') text imposes a coherent narrative line through causal association.

One of the first terms any reader engages with in respect of stories is, of course, plot. Plot is the overarching shape that includes and the rising action, the climax, and the falling action. Peter Brooks writes that plot is the interplay of *sjyzhet* and *fabula* (or story and discourse), "the dynamic shaping force of the narrative discourse."²⁵ Roland Barthes distinguishes elements that move through the plot which he calls nuclei (or cardinal functions) and catalyzers.²⁶ Nuclei, he writes, are the larger of the two and lead directly to the next step in the story. Catalyzers are less direct; they are the smaller actions that lead to the nuclei. Nuclei are turning points when one of two alternatives results in the rest of the story, whereas catalyzers are the chronologically connection movements between nuclei. In the Pied Piper story, important townspeople meet to discuss what they should do about the rats. This serves as a catalyzer, moving toward the nucleus but holds no plot significance in and of itself.

Another important aspect of narrative is, of course, time. Paul Ricoeur's writing addresses the multi-layered complexity that is time within narrative. He also references the German concepts of *Vorhanden*, *Zuhanden*, and *Dasein*. These can be defined as social concerns, material relationships, and being in time or how we relate, respectively. *Dasein*, or Life-world is what we reconstruct through narrative, our place together in time.²⁷ Thus, when we read, each

²⁵ Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 13.

²⁶ Roland Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative," in *Image – Music – Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), 93.

²⁷ Paul Ricoeur, "Narrative Time," in *On Narrative*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 168.

reading is like the first time, whether we know what to expect or have read the story before, or not. In this way, time and time in narrative are not a passing aspect, but central. Our senses of past (memory), present (attention), and future (expectation) are bound up in the concept and reality of time, and narrative is a way of breaking down the flow of time so that we can see what is actually happening. Narrative is a way to address and care for the future by dealing with the way time works out of time. In the case of history, as White addresses, narrative can take a sequence of events in time and make them more than a list of bullet points. Discourse is that art of giving meaning to events, of applying purpose and morality to fact, resulting in something closer to the truth narrative strives for than a historical list can achieve.²⁸

Time within the poem of the Pied Piper is straightforward. Events happen in order without surprise additions to what we know. Still, with each reading or hearing of a Piper story, we hope that the town will keep its word and that the children will be allowed to stay. A Piper narrative reminds us of the lost children from the past, holds our attention as we read or listen, and warns us against making the same mistakes.

The most present yet often least apparent voice in a narrative is that of the narrator. Gérard Genette delves into the concept of the narrator who may or may not be important, may or may not be a character, may or may not be the witness, and may or may not be the author. No matter the actual author, the story is the flow between the narrator and the narratee, who may or may not be the reader.²⁹ In the case of Browning's Piper, we know the author, but there is no particular indication that Browning himself is the narrator.

Another important aspect of narration, which is related to time, is whether the narrator is or is not part of the narrative. If the narrating is outside of the story, it is extradiegetic, whereas

²⁸ White, "The Value of Narrativity," 23.

²⁹ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 213-14.

narrating within the narrative is intradiegetic. This distinction has to do with levels of narration. For example, in *A Thousand and One Nights*, Scheherazade is not the outside narrator, for there is a voice that tells her story, but she narrates all the stories in the middle. The second level of narration is intradiegetic, but it is also metadiegesis, a story within a story.³⁰ In addition to levels of narration, there is also the factor of the narrator being a character. If the narrator is part of the narrative, it is homodiegetic, as with Dr. Watson in Sherlock Holmes stories. Heterodiegetic narrators are not participatory in the story, the most common variety of narrator. Within these four options, the narrator may also be omniscient or fallible. Although it is reasonable for a homodiegetic narrator to be fallible, as Dr. Watson is, a heterodiegetic and extradiegetic narrator could also learn over the course of the narrative, starting with less information than is achieved by the end of the story.³¹

Genette finally asserts that the narrator has five chief obligations. First, and most obvious, the narrator relates the story, whether as the almost unheard voice in many novels or the voice-over of a movie. Second, and closely related, the narrator directs the events or organizes the story, choosing to tell us there was a murder before explaining how it came about. The narrator must also communicate to the narratee. This may seem like a repetition of the previous functions, but the actual narrator/narratee relationship is a separate aspect from the narration itself. Fourth, the narrator provides a testimonial, an expression of perspective. Finally, the narrator serves an ideological function; there is some purpose to telling the story.³²

In the case of Browning's *Piper*, the narrator is clearly outside the story, not one of the specified characters involved. It seems likely that the narrator, like the author, is telling an ancient tale, passed down through generations. In the final stanza (Stanza 15, line 300), the

³⁰ Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 229-31.

³¹ Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 248.

³² Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 255-6.

narrator even addresses a listening witness by name, charging “Willy” to be different from the townsfolk of Hamelin and to keep his promises.³³ Although this narrator knows all the details of the story before relaying it, the tone suggests that s/he, as Willy should, has learned to be more honest through the narrative being shared. This narrator meets all Genette’s expectations, as well. In addition to simply telling what happened in Hamelin, s/he presents the events in order, choosing when to give more information pertaining to peripheral characters like the lame child. The narratee, Willy, is addressed specifically with the narrator’s view on the events of Hamelin and the final warning that is the purpose of telling his tale.

³³ Browning, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, 56.

Chapter 3:

A Narratological Analysis of the *Pied Piper Fantasy*

Many precise directions are included in Corigliano's score to guide a narrative understanding, and the piece is divided into chapters not unlike the stanzas of Browning's poem. This chapter will address relevant concepts clearly illustrated in the music, such as the various participants (the Piper, the children, the rats, the townsfolk) as well as the implied narrator of the fable. The staged aspect of the work also invites an interpretation that is capable of explaining the twist in the tale, a reading that involves distinguishing the story (the events or the action) from the narrative discourse (the way those events are presented). As noted in connection with Chapter One, Corigliano's compositional forms also rely on architectural concepts. In the *Pied Piper Fantasy*, musical architecture aligns with plot. The music follows an architectural arc in presenting the actions of the tale over a period of time (a couple of days for the characters and about 40 minutes for the listeners).

In Browning's poem, the Piper is clearly an outside element and is neither the first nor the last voice to be heard. Corigliano begins the piece similarly, without the soloist on stage, although the Piper appears before any notated indication of the townsfolk. Much of the concerto, in fact, involves orchestra without the flute. The concerto would not be a concerto without the soloist, but the musical story begins and ends in Hamelin, with the Piper nowhere in sight.

Brian Richardson writes that characters in a staged work often fulfill multiple roles, representing recognizable human behaviors or individuals, representing a function within the plot, and representing an ideological position, whether intended by the author or not.³⁴ As within

³⁴ Brian Richardson, "Drama and Narrative," in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman, (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 143.

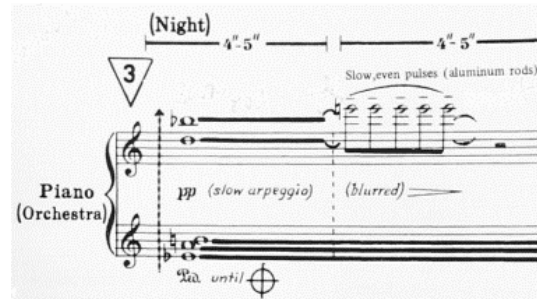
Browning's version, the same characters appear in Corigliano's piece, although in a different order. Richardson's first two forms of character are fairly simple to identify. The solo flute is the Piper, exemplifying a realistic wandering musician and an indispensable part of the plot.

Children, played preferably by real children with flutes, represent actual children in the final stage of the plot. The rats and townsfolk are accounted for by various members of the orchestra, symbolizing very recognizable creatures and ordinary, selfish people. As to Richardson's third criterion—an ideological representation—there are several possible interpretations. The Piper throughout history has been known to symbolize Death, Truth, Fate, and other such grand concepts. In Corigliano's version, the Piper might be something more pleasant like Goodness, fighting evil and drawing good things to himself. The children, then, might be seen as Innocence. The rats could very well be Evil, defeated through bitter battle by Goodness. The townspeople, notably arrogant and ungrateful in most tellings, stand in for humanity itself, rejecting the virtue that might save them, and losing their most treasured possession in the process.

In a novel or a poem, some of the words are clearly descriptors while others are understood to mean action, character, or dialogue. This is less clear in music, although Corigliano includes specific enough instructions that the performers can often tell what role they play. Whether those roles are clear to the listeners is another matter. In the first movement, for instance, sections are described as "Night," "The Stars," "The Sun," and "The Piper's Song." With each change of descriptor, the music and voices also change. "Night" consists primarily of sustained tones and bowed crotales. The first soft chord is made up of E-flat, A, B, D, and B-flat, comprising both the openness of fifths and the dissonance of the tritone (Example 1). Daniel

Walker writes that this “juxtaposition of tonality and atonal language” sets the stage for the music and musical conflict that follows.³⁵

Example 1 *Pied Piper Fantasy*, Piano Score, “Night,” line 1, p. 2.



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After a period denoted in seconds and a series of arrhythmic repeated E₆ pitches, “The Stars” come out with harp and piano barely touching notes in a pointillistic way. “The Sun” continues the improvised passage work at a much faster tempo and across and expanded range. It is noteworthy that the solo flute begins before “The Piper’s Song,” showing the Piper walking out into the dawn (figuratively and literally—the lights are supposed to come up with the soloist) before his theme is introduced.

“The Rats” are represented exclusively by the orchestra. The second movement consists primarily of improvised passages building to a mass of sound and intensity with ominous glissandi from the low brass before the soloist rejoins for “Battle with the Rats.” The battle begins and ends with improvised arcs, but the heat of the battle is a clearly notated rhythmic section. In his interview with Dippre, Corigliano explained that by using guided improvisation,

³⁵ Walker, “Music as Representational Art,” 114.

he gave the instrumentalists a freedom that can be heard in the performance.³⁶ In contrast, the height of the battle is fully notated, adding an intensity that increases the sense of tension.

A “War Cadenza” follows for the soloist alone. Seemingly, the rats have given up the fight. At Rehearsal 19, the rats (violins scratching at the frog) are instructed to play again for a final skirmish. The flute gives three long piercing screams, on F₆, and two on the D-flat₆. After the second D-flat, the Piper cannot compete, and the rats rage in full force. The Piper plays no more combative music; s/he then returns at Rehearsal 21, where the flute line is described as “anguished” and “like a lament.” Corigliano’s program notes say this melody comes out of despair. It also seems possible that the Piper grieves for what s/he must do. “The Piper’s Victory” is a return of the first Piper theme, hypnotizing the rats.³⁷ They are defeated in their trance, drowned in the Piper’s melody (and the river Weser). The Piper’s first theme continues, perhaps as s/he walks back through the fields from the river just as s/he walked through the fields in the morning before the fight. The theme is abruptly interrupted, presumably when the Piper reaches town, by the delighted townsfolk. “The Burgher’s Chorale,” by contrast, is a self-satisfied, brass-heavy march, marked at Rehearsal 27 (Example 2 *Pied Piper Fantasy*, Piano Score, “The Burgher’s Chorale,” Rehearsal 25, line 3, p. 33.) as “pompous and overblown.” Daniel Walker describes this section as “faux-early-music to characterize their disingenuous, pompous nature. And their grandiose entrance is as fake as a \$20 Rolex.”³⁸

³⁶ Dippre, “Compositional Issues,” 20-1.

³⁷ “Programme Note John Corigliano.”

³⁸ Walker, “Music as Representational Art,” 135.

Example 2 *Pied Piper Fantasy*, Piano Score, “The Burgher’s Chorale,” Rehearsal 25, line 3, p. 33.



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The Piper seems willing enough to join in the celebration with the town, but s/he is repeatedly interrupted by the chorale. Clearly the Piper and the townsfolk have a difference of opinion that comes to a head with “The Children’s March.” At this point, the soloist is to switch from flute to tin whistle (Galway’s specialty) or piccolo. A cheery march follows, something it seems the town enjoys or at least cannot resist. At Rehearsal 36, flutists, preferably young, pick up the theme from various positions in the audience. An improvised section on the march follows allowing time for all the audience flutes to make their way to the stage. When all have joined the soloist, everyone plays the march together until Rehearsal 41 when the Piper begins to leave the stage. The children follow, still playing variants on the march, and the orchestra is left behind, sadly echoing the Piper’s first theme. Aside from the theatrical aspect, the Piper and children physically leaving makes it easier both for the listeners and the performers to distinguish the two dramatically different styles and tempos happening simultaneously.³⁹ The Piper and children disappear out the back of the hall, and the orchestra fades back into the star and night music from the first few measure of the piece.

³⁹ “Programme Note John Corigliano.”

It is worth noting that the three movements featuring the rats take up a far greater percentage of the piece than the Piper/Rat interaction does in the poem. Referring to both the rats and the children, Browning writes that before the Piper could sound three notes, he was followed. His notes for the rats, however, are described as “shrill” (Stanza 7, line 106)⁴⁰ while those for the children are “soft” and “sweet” (Stanza 12, line 194–5).⁴¹ Walker points out that “The Piper’s Song” includes a three-note motive, reminiscent of Browning, although the motive comes at the end rather than the beginning of the phrase.⁴² Corigliano similarly distinguishes the music the Piper plays for the rats from that he plays for the children. Browning’s narrator, however, includes an account from one surviving rat who seems to have seen a vision just as wonderful as what the lame boy saw through the Piper’s tune. One can only hope that the rats were deceived and the children were not. In any case, Corigliano’s rats do not hear the same promise in the Piper’s tune that they do in the poem. This was intentional on Corigliano’s part in order to create a level of musical drama necessary to sustain the piece. He explains the change in his program notes, saying that the poem has “no actual confrontations or tensions that could lead me to write virtuosically for the soloist. So I had to modify the story a bit, and I included battle scenes between the Piper and the rats and other elements that could set the soloist’s fingers racing.”⁴³

In Corigliano’s version, the Piper is the protagonist and the rats and the townsfolk the antagonists. But what of the other components of narrative? Musically speaking, the *peripeteia* is unmistakable: “The Children’s March” is music unlike any other part of the work. In addition, the solo instrument changes, physical participants are added to the performance, and the main

⁴⁰ Browning, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, 27.

⁴¹ Browning, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, 39.

⁴² Walker, “Music as Representational Art,” 114.

⁴³ “Programme Note John Corigliano.”

performer actually leaves the stage. As the children leave, the orchestra reverts back to the sustained chords, the star arpeggios, and the repeated E's from the beginning; it is less clear that there is *anagnorisis*, any sense that something has been learned.

An important distinction between narrative that is read as opposed to narrative that is performed center on the experience of time. A book may be put down and picked up again later, and a perplexing or interesting passage may be reread for clarification. Although an audience member may leave a performance, s/he cannot pause and replay at will. In this way, a performance of the *Pied Piper Fantasy* is truer to real life than a reading of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* in that time can only move forward.

Narrative can sometimes create the illusion of causal sequence without actually presenting information in linear order.⁴⁴ In detective novels, for example, the entire plot revolves around the final action in a sequence of events and the piecing together of those events. The forward motion of time during reading is separate from the motion of time in the story. Reordering time this way is much more difficult in music, although it may still be done. It would be possible, for instance, to hear "Night" and "The Stars" not as the beginning and end of the Piper story but as the present in the middle of which a story is told. "Night" and "The Stars" aurally provide something similar to curtains on the stage, the frame to a picture, or the bindings of a book. Whether visual, physical, or aural, there is something that is of the work and yet not of it, something there before the main feature and thereafter.

G rard Genette explains that a narrative may be presented in present-tense form (as with jokes), in past tense (as with most stories), in future tense (as with prophetic or apocalyptic writing), simultaneously (as with stream of thought), or interpolated (as with novels in letters like the *Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*). Each of these methods of relaying narrative

⁴⁴ Ricoeur, "Narrative Time," 165.

approaches time in a different way.⁴⁵ Again, music is a little different; music is not composed in tenses. A piece may recall the past, like Lukas Foss's *Renaissance Concerto*, but the listener does not hear "was, is, or will be." In the *Pied Piper Fantasy*, the "Night" and "The Stars" sections draw the audience in. If they function as the cover, "The Sun" with the first appearance of the solo flute is like a "Once Upon a Time..." There is no specified tense, but the sustained haze of sound from the orchestra and the haunting quality of the flute suggest an imprecise time long since past.

Music does not normally have a narrating voice like that in Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* explaining the musical goings on. Plays, likewise, often lack an obvious narrator. It is up to the dialogue and physical action to guide the audience through the sequence of events.

Corigliano, in his interview with Dippre, says that

music is inherently theatrical. It's the alternating of opposites. It's the building and release of tension. So, I'm not getting into physical theater or the fact that the actor gets up and screams Shakespeare, but I am getting into the elements they have in common, which is theatricality. Which means, one weighs and balances all the time, and one is always setting up something for something else...If you write two similar themes, you're not doing anything. It's all theatrical. It's just that people don't think it's theatrical because it doesn't have words."⁴⁶

Brian Richardson describes some of the possible ways a narrator may be incorporated into a theatrical work. With this in mind, a couple of roles for the narrator arise. One of Richardson's categories is a "frame narrator," an actor who comes out and explains before and after a play as in *Romeo and Juliet* or *Henry V*.⁴⁷ A possible understanding of a "frame narrator" in the *Pied Piper Fantasy* would be to hear the "Night" music not as the stage curtain or book cover, but as an implied narrator mimetically introducing and closing the piece. Another possibility is to see

⁴⁵ Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 216-19.

⁴⁶ Dippre, "Compositional Issues," 22-3.

⁴⁷ Richardson, "Drama and Narrative," 151.

the Piper as the narrator. Richardson describes a “generative narrator,” a character who presents the events as they occur.⁴⁸ Certainly, the Piper guides the structure of the piece, and, in spite of the many times the orchestra interrupts, he seems to direct the transitions musically, even when some of them are surprising. Both of these choices for the narrator are intradiegetic, but whether the “Night” music is heterodiegetic or still homodiegetic could again be a matter of interpretation. In the end, it is up to the performer to decide, a decision which will be addressed in greater in the following chapter.

⁴⁸ Richardson, “Drama and Narrative,” 152.

Chapter 4:

Enacting the Fable: The *Pied Piper Fantasy* in Performance

Brian Richardson writes that “performed narratives like drama also contain an enacted ‘fourth dimension’ where the physical body of the actor may alter the status of the character he or she portrays.”⁴⁹ In the performance notes for the *Pied Piper Fantasy*, Corigliano indicates that the soloist should wear a costume and seem to respond to the actions of the orchestra. A live performance should therefore exhibit chamber music communication skills mixed with theatre; the performer(s) contributes to the narrative, or at least to its telling.

Memorization and physical planning are further vital factors, allied to aleatory and semi-improvisational involvement that demands extensive preparation. Perhaps the most unusual theatrical aspect of Corigliano’s work, however, is that the final section involves other flute players, preferably young, echoing the Piper’s theme as they follow the soloist out of the performance space. With this gesture, Corigliano combines the finality of players physically leaving and breaking the wall of the stage with the lack of musical finality in the fade-out effect of the Piper’s melody.

Flutists who have performed the work were consulted with respect to the ways in which dramatic considerations influenced their performances and how such striking extra-musical aspects might best be realized in the setting of a traditional concert hall. Alexa Still is from New Zealand and teaches flute at Oberlin College and Conservatory. Still’s performances of this work include a substantial production for Corigliano’s seventieth birthday with the Brooklyn Philharmonic with actors and dancers performing as rats. In addition to her live performances,

⁴⁹ Richardson, “Drama and Narrative,” 143.

Still has an audio recording with the New Zealand Symphony, so I asked her specifically about the whether the story comes across a recording.⁵⁰ She replied:

Many of Corigliano's works have fabulous theatrical elements. But being from New Zealand far away from any performances, of course I knew this piece first as a recording--James Galway's recording. I fell in love with that and from the moment I heard it, I knew that I wanted to do it. So, yes, I think the piece is absolutely much more powerful for an audience in a live staged version, but I feel that audio alone is still exceptionally magical.⁵¹

She added that one of the most substantial differences between live and recorded versions is in timing, especially in sections like the cadenza. A live performance may be dramatically improved by virtue of additional time and space. Notes may be allowed to ring; silence may help build the tension. An audio recording, on the other hand, can become stilted under such conditions.⁵²

Deborah Johnson taught flute for many years at Hastings College in Hastings, Nebraska. In 2000, she performed the *Pied Piper Fantasy* with the local community orchestra. She noted that a live performance always offers something more than a recording, but that “knowing the story...when the music changes is easy to follow whether it is live or not.”⁵³ Johnson gave several practical suggestions worth noting for anyone who might imagine the piece too complex and challenging to consider programming. The children performers were all from her studio, and since she teaches the Suzuki Method, a couple of her players memorized “The Children’s March” before learning anything from a book. Additionally, Johnson introduced the concept of the piece to the audience before performing, explaining how the music would tell the story and playing examples of what was to come. In these ways, the event was not just a local orchestra

⁵⁰ James Sedares, conductor, *John Corigliano: Pied Piper Fantasy*, with Alexa Still, flute, and the New Zealand Symphony, Koch International Classics, 2004, Spotify.

⁵¹ Alexa Still, email message to author, June 1, 2018.

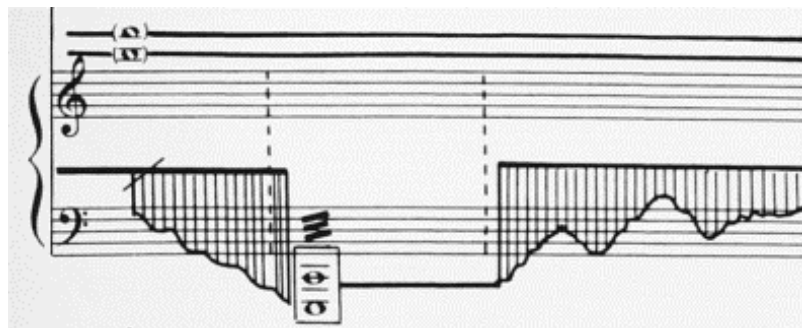
⁵² Still, email message to author, June 1, 2018.

⁵³ Deborah Johnson, email message to author, July 14, 2018.

performance, but also a tailored learning opportunity both for her flute students and for the community. Johnson also found that, in spite of how difficult her part was and the fact that some orchestra members were daunted by their atonal parts, the piece came together easily.⁵⁴ I have found the same thing to be true, as well. Even though my performance lacked a conductor, my pianist and I had very little trouble following each other because the arc Corigliano provides is so clear.

A significant aspect of learning this piece is figuring out how to approach the aleatoric writing. For all performers, whether in the orchestra or the soloist, there are extended sections of controlled improvisation. Corigliano notates precisely, in his own way, what kind of sonic shape should be created. Passages like Rehearsal 12 in “Battle with the Rats” show a melodic arc without specific pitches. Rehearsal 12 also has instances of block chords followed by a line where all chromatic pitches within the block may be played as quickly as possible. In the solo line, there are instances where a single note is to be played quickly without specific rhythms, rather like Morse Code. The figures below show each of these examples (Example 3 *Pied Piper Fantasy*, Piano Score, “Battle with the Rats,” Rehearsal 12, line 3, p. 14. Example 4 *Pied Piper Fantasy*, Piano Score, Rehearsal 12, line 1, p. 15.).

Example 3 *Pied Piper Fantasy*, Piano Score, “Battle with the Rats,” Rehearsal 12, line 3, p. 14.



⁵⁴ Johnson, email message to author, July 14, 2018.

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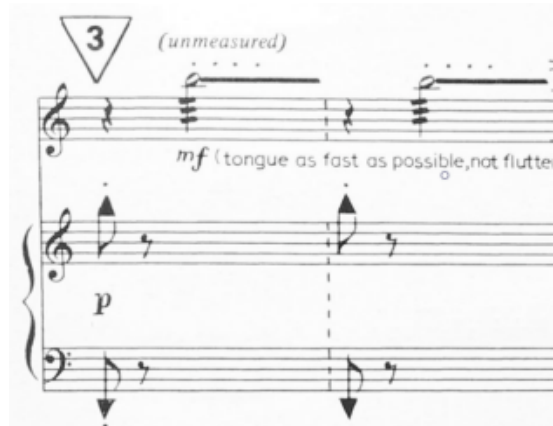
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Example 4 *Pied Piper Fantasy*, Piano Score, Rehearsal 12, line 1, p. 15.



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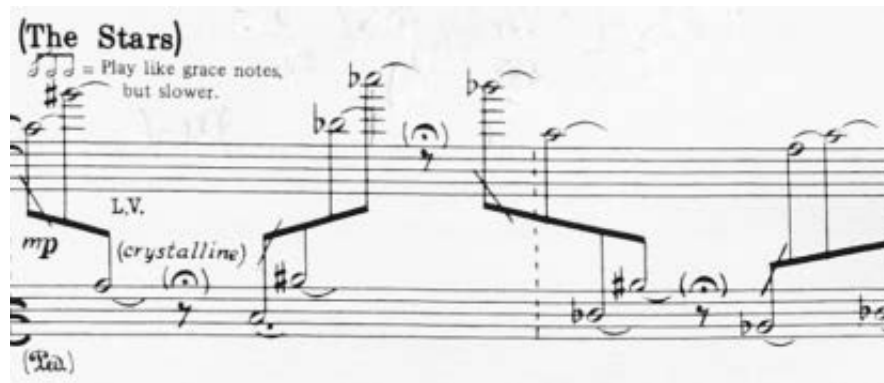
Speaking to Dippre, Corigliano described his aleatoric writing as a way to balance the control of the composer with the freedom of the performer. His notation, like that above, limits the number of notes available to the performer without dictating every detail. The result, he believes is “an attempt to try to get vitality back into the music so that the performers have the freedoms and abilities to do things that are not so complex and so controlled that they have no voice. I’m just as opposed to composer total control as performer total control. I like the mixtures.”⁵⁵

Out of necessity, the about lecture recital given in conjunction with this document, was given with piano rather than a full orchestra. Piano reductions always present difficulties, both tonal and idiomatic, and the *Pied Piper Fantasy* is no exception. After Rehearsal 1, in “The

⁵⁵ Dippre, “Compositional Issues,” 20-1.

Stars,” Corigliano’s instructions read, “Play like grace notes, but slower” and “crystalline,” as shown below (Example 5 *Pied Piper Fantasy*, Piano Score, “Sunrise and the Piper’s Song,” Rehearsal 1, (The Stars), p. 2.).

Example 5 *Pied Piper Fantasy*, Piano Score, “Sunrise and the Piper’s Song,” Rehearsal 1, (The Stars), p. 2.



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The pianist (Ellen Sommer) and I spent quite a bit of time in search of the right sound. In his interview with Dippre, Corigliano explained his use of the word “crystalline:”

Crystalline is like crystals— it sparkles. It's very jewel-like faceted, so it's the star things I ask for. They have points on them. If you look at a crystal, it has many symmetrical facets like snowflakes would have, for example. They're known for their remarkable shape, and sparkle, and clarity, and reflection. So, that kind of a word means to sound like that.⁵⁶

Fortunately, in the full score, this notation is for piano and harp, so the sound quality does not need to be adapted, but it was still necessary to work to achieve a comparable sound from the piano that has both the soft effervescence and sharpness of stars. The repeated E₆s of the “Night,” however, are scored for bowed crotales, and we discovered that a metal credit card drawn (not picking) across the piano strings could create a similarly eerie effect.

⁵⁶ Dippre, “Compositional Issues,” 21.

Another example that gave us difficulty was due primarily to the idiomatic writing Corigliano employs. At Rehearsal 19 in the full score the strings are instructed to “Place bow at frog on string near fingerboard. Press firmly and move very slowly so that a non-pitched scratchy sound will occur.”⁵⁷ The strings represent the rats returning, but that particular timbre is not available on the piano. After much experimenting, Sommer and I concluded that a toothbrush on the strings would provide an acceptable timbre, introducing that character change in the piano.

Corigliano suggests that the soloist be dressed in some type of costume, as Galway was for the premier.⁵⁸ Choices for clothing vary with the performance. Some, like Alexa Still’s with the Brooklyn Philharmonic, extend to costumes for the other performers with red lights for the eyes of the rat actors. A video of Richard Sherman with the Michigan State University Symphony shows him in a leprechaun-like costume, a green cloak, elfin hat, and red pointed shoes.⁵⁹ Deborah Johnson chose a more quiet, black skirt with a loud jacket, specifically choosing to leave more of the story to the music with less emphasis on the theatrical aspects. Browning’s Piper’s “queer long coat from heel to head | Was half of yellow and half of red” (Stanza 5, lines 58–9).⁶⁰ In the lecture recital, I opted not for half-and-half, but pied. My long jacket was blocks of colored scraps pieced together in no particular pattern. The costume does not make the performance, but it does contribute to the tone of the performed narrative.

John Rink has written about approaching instrumental works as a kind of narration, events unfolding in time. His narrative concept is not tied to literature, and he writes, “To link the narrative thread that guides a performance to a verbal narrative—a story in words—would

⁵⁷ John Corigliano, *Pied Piper Fantasy for Flute and Orchestra*, Flute and Piano Score. (Milwaukee, WI: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1991), Rehearsal 19, 59.

⁵⁸ “Programme Note John Corigliano.”

⁵⁹ John Corigliano, *Pied Piper Fantasy*, and the Michigan State Symphony Orchestra with Richard Sherman, Leon Gregorian, conductor, performed April 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAhsmfTkrx4>.

⁶⁰ Browning, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, 22.

miss the point of the metaphor.”⁶¹ In the case of the *Pied Piper Fantasy*, the literary link is inseparable from the music, but Rink makes a point about performing that is valuable for this work. In understanding a piece as a narrative arc occurring in the present time, Rink proposes that the performer must engage in constant inner dialogue between the “comprehensive architecture and the ‘here-and-now.’” This applies directly to a *Pied Piper Fantasy* performance, wherein the soloist must balance the present musical moment with the context of Corigliano’s architecture and with the Pied Piper tale.

The previous chapter offered some possible interpretations of the implied narrator. One of the options was the “generative narrator” that Richardson describes. In this case, that would mean that the Piper serves as both a character and the narrator. Especially in the performance that accompanies this document, a Piper-as-narrator interpretation is practical. Without a conductor, there are many musical instances where the Piper, the persona on stage, must direct changes while in character. This understanding gives the Piper a stronger personality than Daniel Walker suggests; he proposes a more innocent Piper to whom musical events happen.⁶² From a performer’s standpoint, Walker’s understanding of an almost naive Piper would be a liberating way to play with a conductor and full orchestra, but the narrating Piper seems more practical for a performance without someone to lead the production.

There are elements of narrative analysis that do not copy perfectly from a written work to a piece of music. In spite of this, a narrative understanding can provide valuable practical insight to supplement a performance. Fred Maus writes that, “In my view, analogies to narrative can show their value for music criticism by the insights and experiences they produce, the

⁶¹ John Rink, “Translating Musical Meaning: The Nineteenth-Century Performer as Narrator,” in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 218.

⁶² Walker, “Music as Representational Art,” 109.

relationships with music that they help to create.”⁶³ That is the goal of this commentary: to use narrative interpretation to further the understanding of Corigliano’s *Pied Piper Fantasy* in ways that are meaningful both for the performer and for the listener.

⁶³ Fred Everett Maus, “Classical Instrumental Music and Narrative,” in James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (eds.), *A Companion to Narrative Theory* Malden, (Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 480–1.

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